

FRENCH INDQ-CHINA

In all Khmer art forms the model is generally Indian as well as the subject-matter, save what is taken from Cambodia's legendary past. The whole country is filled with these sombre and burning ruins, of whose origin the modem Cambodians are inordinately proud but totally ignorant. They speak of these monuments in the most fanciful vein, preferring to attribute to them a supernatural construction rather than to search out the reality* Cambodia is certainly the richest art centre in the peninsula, for its aristocracy for many generations had as its preoccupation the building of temples, the accumulation of gold and of merit, Khmer architecture, which flourished for eight centuries, is the most universally admired of Cambodian arts, and there is charm and originality in its *ru&cete** The earliest temples were constructed in wood, so that the Brahman monuments and the Buddhist builders who came after them, by using more durable materials have survived in greater quantity. Plan and perspective, designs of delicacy and richness have been the chief beauty of Khmer monuments, not the technical side of the construction, which was always their weak point. Their magnificent achievement represented an enormous drain on the country's resources and labour* for they were built with comparative rapidity. Many were left unfinished, perhaps because of the superstition that completion might provoke the death of their donor. As a by-product, sculpture and the goldsmith's art were highly developed as part of the Khmer love of delicate and harmonious ornamentation. Khmer architecture revealed a sudden splendour and an equally abrupt decadence* This partly due to wars and partly to the influence of BuddMsaa,

Inherently hostile to the development of art 'and
 literature
 as it to all forms which expressed personality.
 The creators of literature* like the architects, were
 generally anony-
 and were Court poets and bonzes. Perhaps It Was just
 as well, for
 on the whole Khmer literature is monotonous and
 abounding in senteB-
 It is derived from 'Chinese literature
 but wholly
 to Baodels, especially the Raimyana
 and the
 previous existences of Btiddha. In
 are of the sacred books, technical studies
 on medicine^
 of maxims* and above all
 versified
 The last are of a type story dealing
 with i
 by Court Intrigues which rend the
 Deserving princes and princesses flee
 are noneu-
 for long years 'and have adventures